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SUBJECT: STATE DEPARTMENT REPORTS PROMPT DISCUSSION

¶1. (U) Summary: The March 2 publication of the Department's International Narcotics Strategy Control Report (INSCR), and the March 5 publication of the Department's Human Rights Report not only attracted widespread media attention in Montenegro, but also prompted calls for discussion and action. The advancement of good governance is a key USG goal in Montenegro. End summary.

INCSR

¶2. (U) The International Narcotics Strategy Control Report (INSCR) for the first time in Montenegro attracted extensive media coverage. (Note: In previous years, only Part II of the INCSR (money-laundering) was submitted in respect of Montenegro. End note.) The major daily put the Report on its front page, headlined: "Suspicious money laundered through real estate." The head of Montenegro's Administration for the Prevention of Money Laundering announced "strengthened control of the real estate market following the State Department's report." The leader of the opposition Socialist People's Party (SNP), Srdjan Milic, told poloff March 5 that his party would call for the government to provide answers to questions raised by the INCSR, including the disposition of 400 offshore firms closed in 2002, and an explanation of how the government decides to block financial transactions and freeze assets. Milic added he felt both numbers were too low (15 of 152 suspicious transactions were temporarily blocked.) Opposition daily "Dan" reported increased Government action to combat tobacco smuggling.

Human Rights Practices Country Report

¶3. (U) Following the INCSR was the Human Rights Report, run as the main story in all major electronic media and daily newspapers. A prominent NGO activist, and head of the police civilian control board, assessed the report as a "very objective" report which reminds both Montenegrin and regional public on their serious shortages... Opposition daily "Dan" noted that the report highlighted the unresolved murder of Dan's editor Dusko Jovanovic. Jovan Vucurovic, spokesman for the opposition Serbian People's Party - SNS, said the report proves that the U.S. has been closely following the murder investigation and that it would be good if such reports result in pressure on the government. Neboksa Vujinic, an International Law professor at the University of Montenegro, said "... the report is mainly accurate," while criticizing the USG's record on human rights.

BARNES